

Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:1-49

Daniel 2:1-49 - *"Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. ² Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. ³ And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream."*

⁴ Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation."

⁵ The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap. ⁶ However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation."

⁷ They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation."

⁸ The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: ⁹ if you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation."

¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. ¹¹ It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

¹² For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. ¹³ So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.

¹⁴ Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; ¹⁵ he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.

¹⁶ So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. ¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸ that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

²⁰ Daniel answered and said:

*"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and might are His.*

*²¹ And He changes the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have understanding.*

*²² He reveals deep and secret things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him.*

²³ "I thank You and praise You,

*O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king's demand."*

²⁴ Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation."

²⁵ Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation."

²⁶ The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?"

²⁷ Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. ²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: ²⁹ As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. ³⁰ But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

³¹ "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. ³² This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. ³⁴ You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

³⁶ "This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; ³⁸ and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. ³⁹ But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. ⁴¹ Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. ⁴³ As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. ⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵ Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." ⁴⁸ Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

Background Notes

In Daniel 2 we have the account of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. God revealed the meaning of the dream to Daniel, and after thanking and praising the Lord (v20-23), Daniel went in before the king with the interpretation.

Doctrinal Points

1. The statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents "the times of the Gentiles."

In Luke 21:24 the Lord Jesus said, *"And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* The "times of the Gentiles" began with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586BC and will continue until the Lord returns after the future Tribulation period, when He will deliver Jerusalem from Gentile domination. The times of the Gentiles are represented in chronological sequence, from head to toe, in the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The head of gold represents Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire. The chest and arms of silver represent the Medo-Persian Empire. The stomach and thighs of bronze represent the Greek Empire, and the legs of iron represent the Roman Empire. The two legs of iron probably represent the Roman Empire as it was divided into west and east.

The feet and toes of the statue were partly of iron and partly of clay or brittle pottery. The feet and toes do not represent a fifth empire, but rather the final stage of the fourth empire. Since it's hard to fit this stage of the Roman Empire into past history, we believe that it is prophetic of the last days before the return of the Lord. For this reason the feet and toes are often called the "revived Roman Empire." The revived Roman Empire will consist of ten sub-kingdoms and their kings, based on the ten toes of the statue (Daniel 2), as well as the ten horns of the fourth beast in Daniel 7, and the ten horns of the first beast in Revelation 13.

The "beasts" in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 also represent the revived Roman Empire of the end times. It is possible that the present European Union is the early stages of this revived Roman Empire. The EU increasingly has the strength of iron in its control of European affairs, but it also is brittle like pottery because of its different member nations.

Notice that the entire statue was smashed all at once, including the gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay (v45). For this reason, many students of Bible prophecy believe that vestiges of all four empires will remain until the return of the Lord. We can see this even today. Babylon is represented in modern Iraq. Persia is represented in present day Iran. Syria today is a vestige of the old Greek Empire, especially after the death of Alexander the Great when that whole area became the Seleucid Kingdom. And of course, Rome is represented today in Europe and the Western nations.

Question: Is the United States represented in the "foot" stage of the statue? Does one of the toes, for example, represent the presence of the United States in the revived Roman Empire?

Answer: We don't know! No one can be dogmatic at the present time. But what we can say for sure is that the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents the wide scope of world history from the Babylonian Empire right on to the end times and the return of Christ. The statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents "the times of the Gentiles."

2. The stone in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents the return of the Lord.

In the dream, the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain, which then filled the whole earth. In verse 44 we see that this mountain represents a kingdom that God sets up, a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Now comes the big question: Do the stone and the mountain represent the **first** coming of Christ and the resulting Christian church? Or do the stone and mountain represent the **second** coming of Christ, and the resulting earthly kingdom of Christ, known as the millennial kingdom?

Let me list three reasons why we believe the stone and the mountain represent the second coming of Christ and His worldwide millennial kingdom, which will merge with eternity and thus never be destroyed.

1. At the first coming of Christ, the Roman Empire was not divided into ten sub-kingdoms or divisions, as in the "foot and toes" in the revived empire when the Lord returns.
2. In the dream, the stone that struck the statue came in like a missile, crushing the statue suddenly, and the dust is blown away so that not a trace is left (v35). This destruction of empires never happened at the first coming of Christ. The Lord did not suddenly bring down all Gentile power, and the church did not suddenly replace all Gentile power. But when the Lord returns to this earth in judgment, all worldly power will be removed and the Lord will establish His worldwide kingdom of peace.
3. The Church is still not taking over the world (growing into a great mountain). If anything, the influence of the Church is ebbing in world affairs. For these reasons, and others that could be given, we believe that the stone in Nebuchadnezzar's dream does not represent the first coming of Christ, but rather the return of the Lord in the future.

Practical Application

Decide to be a Daniel!

Verses 46-49, "*Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. 47 The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." 48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.*"

Daniel is a great example and model of a faithful believer. We should not only **dare** to be a Daniel (as we saw in our talk on Daniel 1), but we should **decide** to be a Daniel as well! Daniel not only showed courage, but he made other decisions that we would do well to emulate.

Daniel didn't take any credit for himself when he shared the interpretation of the dream with Nebuchadnezzar -- Daniel gave all the credit to the Lord (v28-30)! And at the end of the chapter we see that Daniel wasn't selfish. He didn't think only of himself when he was exalted. He put in a good word for his friends who had prayed with and for him.

Daniel made good and godly decisions, and so should we. We can do it if we follow the model and example of Daniel. So, we should not only **dare** to be a Daniel -- we should also **decide** to be a Daniel!